

New Hampshire Special Education Program Approval Report

SAU 47

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Final Copy

March 24, 1999

Visit Conducted on: February 3-4, 1999

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Students With Disabilities

(Commendations, Citations, and Suggestions for each school)

Note: *It should be noted that suggestions are not considered corrective actions and therefore are given as technical assistance. The district is not mandated to implement them.*

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SAU 47

I. INTRODUCTION:

A New Hampshire Department of Education Special Education Program Approval visit was conducted in SAU 47 comprised of the following schools: Rindge Memorial School, Jaffrey Grade School, Jaffrey-Rindge Middle School and Conant High School. The visiting team met on February 3-4, 1999 in order to review the status of Special Education services being provided to eligible students.

Activities related to this evaluation included the close review of all the teaching certifications of special education staff, analysis of SPEDIS data and random inspection of student records. Interviews were held with the special education director, building principals, regular and special education teachers and related service personnel and administrators as time and availability permitted. In addition, the team conducted parent interviews via phone. Throughout the visit the team had full cooperation from the school personnel and this helpfulness was greatly appreciated.

The report which you are about to read represents the consensus of all the members of the visiting team. Please keep in mind that this is a "report for exception", meaning that only exceptions to the N.H. State Standards have been addressed. If a component is not mentioned, that does not mean that the team did not review it; it just means that there were no citations of noncompliance to the Standards found in that particular area.

II. STATUS OF PREVIOUS ON-SITE: *Conducted on December 14 -15, 1993*

Based on a review of the previous program approval report, as well as the application materials submitted for the 1999 Program Approval visits and visits to all of the schools within SAU47, the visiting team determined that SAU 47 staff have made significant efforts to show improvement and to address the citations noted in the 1993 report.

Areas of noncompliance noted during the previous visit included: evaluations that were often taking longer than 45 days to complete; LEA representatives not present at student meetings; diagnostic teams lacking appropriately certified personnel and extended year programming was not appropriately documented or addressed.

The district has recently addressed all of these issues. A part time diagnostician to assist in evaluations has very recently been added; three additional staff in addition to the building principals have been designated as LEA representatives; an LD certified staff member has been added to the diagnostic team; special education forms have been updated in an effort to address such issues as extended school year consideration; and the Special Education Teacher Handbook and Parent/Student Handbooks have been updated.

II. STATUS OF PREVIOUS ON-SITE: Continued

These, and other efforts made recently to improve the overall procedural requirements are to be commended. However, these improvements are fairly recent and the visiting team was not able to see many of the results. Through interviews with staff they did find an awareness of new procedures and an interest in correcting previous areas of non-compliance.

While this visit did reveal a significant pattern of non-compliance in areas addressed throughout this report, the consensus of the team is that the district staff are making a concerted effort to show improvement in procedural areas and have made regular, consistent growth in the areas of overall special education programming. Further, the staff show a professional and enthusiastic interest in continuing to look ahead and plan for the future of educational programming within this district.

III. ISSUES OF SIGNIFICANCE:

While it was clear to the visiting team that the staff of SAU 47 are hard working professionals who have made efforts to correct the previous areas of noncompliance, it is also evident that there continues to be patterns of noncompliance related to the delivery of Special Education services that must be addressed. A number of the same themes and areas in need of attention that were present five years and noted during the previous on-site visitation still exist today. The team does acknowledge the fact that recent improvements have been implemented but these changes are so new that the visiting team was unable to observe many of the corrections. Therefore the district should continue to guarantee that previous and current areas of noncompliance will continue to be corrected as soon as possible.

Ongoing inservice training in all aspects of state and federal guidelines for special education should be offered to all staff (regular and special education).

Professional staff would benefit from specific building level support and guidance as they work to correctly implement the state and federal guidelines for special education. The recent changes in the Federal IDEA law impose even greater obligations upon school districts to ensure that the regular educator is fully involved as part of the special education process.

The district does not provide any clerical support to the special education process in the individual buildings. Such assistance may help maintain more accurate and consistent records of all special education procedures, as well as allow the professional education staff to devote more time to the delivery of services than to clerical tasks.

The Middle School building appears to be overcrowded and the district has been working toward finding a solution to this important issue. They are encouraged to continue work in this area as classroom space limitations and a lack of meeting and planning space for staff have an impact on the delivery of student services. There are also some space issues seen at Jaffrey Grade School, particularly in the resource room areas.

The district is directing significant efforts in the area of improving reading literacy scores and is commended for this curriculum component that now is available to students from grades one through high school. The district's other initiatives include a DEIP (District Educational Improvement Plan)

III. ISSUES OF SIGNIFICANCE: Continued

team, a TAC (Technology Advisory Committee), a building needs committee and a Safe School committee that are working to address present needs and to create meaningful long range planning. These district-wide initiatives cut across all learning needs creating an atmosphere of vision and future planning.

The specific procedural areas that the visiting team found to be in need of correction should be addressed as soon as possible. However, it is important to note that there is a high level of quality instruction present throughout this SAU and a clear sense of cooperation and respect among educational staff.

IV. COMMENDATIONS, CITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS: SAU WIDE

Name of Program(s) Visited: All

COMMENDATIONS:

- The district is commended for its commitment to ongoing planning in areas of curriculum, building needs and student safety.
- The Superintendent of Schools is commended for his leadership and concern for the future of the Jaffrey Rindge School District.
- The Director of Special Education is commended for his interest in improving all aspects of special education. Staff, in all buildings, credit him with consistent and caring supervision and leadership.
- The district is commended for the frequent use of college interns from Franklin Pierce College and Keene State College, in an effort to offer training opportunities to teacher interns as well as extend the availability of adult attention to students.
- The educational staff in the Jaffrey/Rindge School District are professional and interested in ongoing efforts in the areas of district planning initiatives, curriculum development and instructional best practices.
- The district is commended for its literacy program that extends from the elementary level through the high school. The concern for improving overall reading achievement is impressive and the visiting team found support for the Wilson Reading program throughout the system.

CITATIONS: (in numerical order)

Ed#1107.05(k) There are numerous evaluations not completed within 45 days.

SUGGESTIONS:

- The relatively high number of procedural errors discovered throughout the district's special education records (please see individual building citations) indicates that ongoing training in the areas of state and federal regulations related to the implementation of special education programming is recommended. Such training should be offered to all staff; general education, special education, paraprofessionals, and administrators. The role of the regular educator in the special education process is evolving as a result of the Amendments to the IDEA and all staff should be aware of their responsibilities to individual students and programs.
- The space needs at the Middle School appear to have a significant impact on instructional options. The district is encouraged to continue seeking solutions to the building and space needs for the Middle School aged population.
- Providing clerical support at the building level would begin to help address the issues of noncompliance found in a number of procedural areas, such as notification to parents. The special educators are presently responsible for all clerical activities related to special education which takes away from the time devoted to direct work with students.

PRESCHOOL PROGRAM

PROGRAM(S) VISITED: Inclusive Preschool Program

COMMENDATIONS:

- There is clear staff commitment to addressing individual student needs through an integrated program.
- The preschool staff are warm and nurturing and provide very positive instructional interactions with students.
- The staff display a strong sense of team effort in planning and programming for students.
- There is a high level of administrative support.
- The classroom environment and educational activities are developmentally appropriate.
- There is a good staff:student ratio.
- The staff are commended for providing an integrated program for preschool students with special education needs.

CITATIONS:

Ed#1107.02, Ed#1107.05 2 files: The result of independent Early Intervention evaluations results in
Ed#1107.06, Ed#1107.07 a lack of documentation of referrals and evaluations of preschool students.

Ed#1109.01(c) 2 files: No documentation showing extent of participation in regular classes.

Ed#1111.01 2 files: No documentation that Extended School Year programming was considered prior to 4/30 or 60 days before starting.

Ed#1115.06 2 files: No documentation showing LRE determined annually.

Ed#1125.03 2 files: No Written Prior Notice documentation found.

Ed#1125.04 2 files: No written consent to evaluate or written consent for placement found in files.

SUGGESTIONS:

- Inservice training is recommended to provide all staff with current information regarding the present state and federal guidelines for the implementation of special education programs.
- There is a clear indication that the system of communication with the Early Intervention program needs to be improved in an effort to insure that all appropriate documentation of the referral and evaluation process is transferred to the district's special education student records.

RINDGE MEMORIAL SCHOOL

PROGRAM(S) VISITED: Intensive Learning Center, Learning Center

COMMENDATIONS:

- The special education programs at Rindge Memorial School are clearly child centered and, according to one parent, the staff “bend over backwards” for the students.
- The faculty’s sense of team spirit is to be commended.
- Special education and general education staff meet to communicate, to the degree possible, during school before and after school.
- Staff feel very supported by the building administrator.
- The atmosphere in the school is a positive and welcoming one.
- The building is attractive and clean; learning areas are well designed and brightly decorated.

CITATIONS:

<u>Ed#1107.05(k)</u>	1 file: Evaluation not completed within 45 days and extension not signed.
<u>Ed#1109.01(j)</u>	1 file: One file did not list individuals or service providers responsible for implementing the IEP.
<u>Ed#1111.01</u>	1 file: No evidence that Extended School Year was considered in one file. And in two files the process was not completed by 4/30 or 60 days before starting.
<u>Ed#1119.05</u>	The Learning Center Program serves students in grades K-5, thus exceeding the age range limitations.

SUGGESTIONS:

- Consider the addition of clerical support to assist the special educators with filing and general organization matters.
- Provide ongoing staff inservice training regarding the current federal and state guidelines for implementing special education programs. It’s suggested that both general and special education staff (including paraprofessionals) be included in the training.
- Consider ways to increase the availability of computer access to students. Explore options for software programs and consider the need for any adaptive equipment to computer hardware.
- Consider all possibilities for creating specific times for general and special education staff to meet to communicate about students, curriculum and program issues.

JAFFREY GRADE SCHOOL

PROGRAM(S) VISITED: Intensive Learning Center, Learning Center

COMMENDATIONS:

- The staff at the Jaffrey Grade School are friendly, committed to their work and child oriented.
- There is a sense of mutual respect between general and special education staff and related service providers.
- The efforts made toward a system of communication is to be commended. Some staff, identifying this area as a priority, arrange to meet on their own time.
- There is excellent collaboration evident between the Intensive Learning staff and mainstream staff.
- The efforts directed toward early education intervention through the reading partners program is commended.
- There is a well designed Curriculum Guide and Topics of Study based on the NH Frameworks and teacher expected sub skills.

CITATIONS:

<u>Ed#1107.02(b)</u>	1 file: Written notice to parent following referral, was not evident in student file.
<u>Ed#1107.02(d)</u>	2 files: No written notice to parents within 15 days of initial referral in files.
<u>Ed#1107.03(a)</u>	2 files: Evaluation team does not meet multidisciplinary criteria.
<u>Ed#1107.05(k)</u>	2 files: Evaluation not completed within 45 days. Extensions not found in files.
<u>Ed#1107.06</u>	1 file: Evaluation Summary Report is not current.
<u>Ed#1107.08(c)</u>	1 file: No observation found in student file.
<u>Ed#1109</u>	2 files: No evidence of regular and systematic monitoring of IEP.
<u>Ed#1109.01</u>	1 file: IEP does not include present level of performance or extent of participation in regular class.
<u>Ed#1109.03(a-d)</u>	2 files: IEP development team was not fully appropriate.
<u>Ed#1111.01</u>	1 file: No evidence that Extended School Year was considered. 2 files: Process not completed by 4/30 or 60 days before starting.
<u>Ed#1115.03</u>	2 files: Placement team memberships not fully appropriate.
<u>Ed#1125.03</u>	1 file: Written Prior Notice forms not consistent in one file.

JAFFREY GRADE SCHOOL, continued

SUGGESTIONS:

- In an effort to address and correct the pattern found in procedural errors, staff training and support in all areas of special education policy and procedures is strongly suggested. It is recommended that both general and special educators be included in such training.
- Communication between general and special education staff is critical in order to fully implement inclusionary plans. It is suggested that administration and staff work together to identify a regular system for staff to meet to plan and communicate around student IEP and programming issues.
- Clerical assistance to maintain an orderly and systematic method of record keeping, as well as to assist in scheduling meetings, sending written notice to parents etc. is suggested.
- The Intensive Program may benefit from having more instructional materials available.
- Review staffing patterns to determine if present staff are able to fully implement the individual student needs in the least restrictive setting.
- There are space issues seen at the Jaffrey Grade School, particularly in the resource room area. It is recommended that administration continue to seek solutions to providing optimal learning environments.

JAFFREY - RINDGE MIDDLE SCHOOL

PROGRAM(S) VISITED: 1) Intensive Learning Center, 2) 8th Grade Learning Center
3) Behavior Program

COMMENDATIONS:

- The Middle School staff have created a warm, positive team approach to programming. Communication and cooperation between all levels is evident.
- The student organizers are an excellent tool for student planning and for communication between home and school.
- The related service personnel have a strong involvement and commitment to programs, community and students.
- The use of the Wilson Reading Program to improve reading literacy appears to be positively affecting all students.
- The parent volunteer program is commended.
- The Middle School is commended for the involvement of the Franklin Pierce College students through the Pierce Pals program.

CITATIONS:

- Ed#1107.07©(3) 3 files: LEA Representative not present at meetings.
- Ed#1107.08 (a)(1) 1 file: Regular education teachers not present at meetings.
- Ed#1109 1 file: No evidence of regular and systematic monitoring of IEP.
- Ed#1109.03(b)(1)(2) 2 files: IEP development team not appropriate. (No LEA rep or regular ed. teachers.
- Ed#1109.04(a) 3 files: No evidence that parents were given a 10 day written notice of the IEP meeting.
- Ed#1111.01 (e)(1) 3 files: Extended School Year consideration not completed by 4/30 or 60 days before starting.
- Ed#1115.03(a)(b) 3 files: No regular education teachers or LEA representative present at placement meetings.
- Ed#1123.04(a)(7) There is no record of access for files.
- Ed#1109.05 (a) All people who have responsibilities for implementation of the students IEP's do not have copies of them.

JAFFREY - RINDGE MIDDLE SCHOOL, Continued
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SUGGESTIONS:

- There is a significant space issue at the middle school. Instructional spaces are, in some situations, too small to adequately accommodate the necessary equipment and to provide for the instruction of students. The access to the art room appears to be potentially difficult to maneuver, particularly in the case of an emergency evacuation. The district is strongly encouraged to continue pursuing efforts to provide a more appropriate instructional space for the middle school student population.
- A system for providing copies of student IEP's to staff (including paraprofessionals) working with the students is necessary. There is presently no record of access to the special education files and the visiting team found that access to these confidential records seemed to be "open".
- Clerical support may be a solution to the relatively high number of non-compliance issues discovered in the special education record keeping system. It is suggested that the middle school review through training and ongoing supervision the procedures required to meet state and federal guidelines for the provision of special education.
- Review the relatively high numbers of coded students to identify any patterns related to the need for special education services. The district has already identified issues related to literacy and are encouraged to continue looking at other factors as well. A teacher assistance team pre-referral process may help in this area.
- There is no specific program number assigned to the Behavior Program at the Middle School. The staff should request a program number be assigned if this is a separate special education program.

CONANT HIGH SCHOOL

PROGRAM(S) VISITED: 1) Learning Center 2) Intensive Learning Center

COMMENDATIONS:

- There is a level of cooperation apparent between the special education and regular education staff.
- The addition of the Wilson Reading Program at the high school level is commended.
- The High School administration is very supportive to the staff and the special education programming.
- The Vocational and School To Work programs have a positive impact at the high school.
- Special education staff are fully members of the high school community and provide a link from special education student needs to general high school activities.
- The building is well maintained and offers good instructional areas for all students.

CITATIONS:

<u>Ed#1102.35 (a-n)</u>	1 file: Transition statement, including all components, is not completed.
<u>Ed#1107.02(b)(d)</u>	3 files: Upon referral from any source, written notice is not given to parents. Written Prior notice is not offered within 15 days of disposition.
<u>Ed#1107.03 (a)</u>	1 file: Evaluation team does not meet multidisciplinary criteria.
<u>Ed#1107.03 (d)(I)</u>	1 file: Three year evaluation not done.
<u>1107.05(k)</u>	Evaluations at the High School often take longer than 45 days.
<u>Ed#1107.05 to</u> <u>Ed#1107.08</u>	1 file: All evaluation related documentation is missing from one file.
<u>Ed#1109</u>	1 file: No evidence of regular and systematic monitoring of IEP.
<u>Ed#1109.01(l)</u>	1 file: Transition component is not included.
<u>Ed#1109.04(a)(d)</u>	2 files: No evidence that 10 day written notice of IEP meeting is offered to parents.
<u>Ed#111.01</u> <u>Ed#1113.02</u>	3 files: Extended school year was not completed by 4/30 or 60 days before starting. 2 files: Vocational component is not an integral part of the students IEP.
<u>Ed#1125.03</u>	1 file: No Written Prior Notice in file.
<u>Ed#1109.5(a)</u>	All people who have responsibilities for implementation for students IEP do not have a copy of IEP.

SUGGESTIONS:

- It is strongly suggested that all staff be provided with ongoing inservice training opportunities related to the current state and federal guidelines for providing special education services to students.
- Further professional development inservice training in the areas of developing classroom modifications and offering other methods of support to students would also be of benefit to all staff.
- Provide regular and consistent opportunities for special education and regular education staff to meet to communicate about issues relating to curriculum planning, needed classroom assistance, meeting individual student needs, program development and other general issues of communication.
- Clerical support is suggested as a means of correcting the overall record keeping systems related to all special education procedures.
- The pattern of noncompliance in procedural areas indicates that direct support and assistance in making corrections in these areas is warranted.
- Paraprofessional staff should be included in any training initiatives that may be relevant to their assignments. Paraprofessionals should have access to student IEP's and should be provided with information and necessary to provide support to assigned students.
- Review the currently available computers and related technology to determine if all students have equal opportunities for access and learning in this area.

ADDENDUM

JAMES O. MONITORING PROGRAM

SAU 47

Student File Review

Case Study Document

Reimbursement Claim Form

Case Study Addendum Form

<p style="text-align: center;">ADDENDUM JAMES O. MONITORING PROGRAM</p>

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CITATIONS:

Ed#1111.01(e)(l) 2 files: One file did not indicate consideration of extended year programming. Two files did not complete the process by 4/30 or 60 days prior to starting.

SUGGESTIONS:

- The out of district files, including James O. student records, are kept in orderly condition with relatively few procedural errors noted. The district should continue to implement any changes to special education procedures in these records as they continue to monitor the progress of court ordered placed students.